

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan believes in equality—especially when it comes to access to healthcare. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act has broad implications that will restrict and deny healthcare services to thousands. As such, we oppose HB 5958.

Freedom of religion is one of our most fundamental rights as Americans. That is why it is protected in the state and federal constitution. But that freedom does not give any of us the right to harm others. Unlike our current constitutional protections for freedom of religion, this new law would put an individual's religious beliefs ahead of the common good.

As a leading healthcare provider in Michigan, Planned Parenthood is concerned that services and treatments may be denied under the claim of religious belief. Could a pharmacist withhold a medication? Could a counselor refuse to counsel a student? Could a health worker violate health and safety procedures and protocols?

If this new law passes, it will allow people to take advantage and claim that their religion gives them the right to ignore laws. And it will allow individuals to decide that non-discrimination laws, child abuse laws, and domestic violence laws do not apply to them.

A few examples:

- A couple could be denied IVF treatment because of a physician's religious objection.
- A patient might not be dispensed life-saving HIV drugs due to a healthcare worker's religious belief.
- A man could claim that domestic violence laws do not apply to him because his religion teaches that a husband has the right to discipline his family, including his wife and children, as he sees fit.
- A pharmacist could refuse to fill a prescription for daily birth control pills because of his/her religious beliefs.
- A guidance counselor could refuse to help a gay student because of the counselor's religious beliefs.

Religious freedom is fundamental to personal liberty, but the right to act on ones' beliefs is not absolute. It is not a free pass to ignore the law or violate the basic civil rights of others.

Sincerely,



Amanda West
Director of Government Relations
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan